



# Technical Assistance Bulletin

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## Working With Mass Media

*Whether in an urban setting or a rural setting,  
ensuring good media coverage and handling communications in a crisis is a must.*

*This technical assistance bulletin presents media planning information in three parts:  
The first describes basic steps to ensure good media coverage.  
The second focuses on special considerations for small-town and rural areas.  
The third provides essential information on handling communications in a crisis.*

### Ensuring Good Media Coverage

Good media coverage contributes to effective substance abuse prevention efforts. Understanding the why's and how's of media relations will smooth the way in working with editors and reporters

*Frame issues in ways that compel coverage.*

and can help ensure good media coverage in all settings. First and foremost, make sure media relations are proactive and compel media coverage. Identify media spokespersons for the organization,

develop and maintain media lists, use news releases and advisories effectively, hold news conferences and briefings, prepare

letters to the editor and op-ed articles, and get public service announcements (PSAs) on the air. It is also important to keep track of progress by monitoring and measuring the media coverage.

#### 1. Make Sure Media Relations Are Proactive

Frame prevention issues in ways that compel media coverage. Use:

- *An angle or "hook" that makes information compelling or controversial.*

Cyclical, calendar-based events make good hooks or pegs to get the message across. For example, how can holiday drinking be combated on New Year's Eve? Enlist bartenders in speaking out



Communications

against excessive drinking, and get them to explain how they keep patrons from getting into trouble.

Work with local police to tie in their drinking barricades with a prevention message. If they are increasing enforcement on a particular weekend or evening, make sure that a spokesperson is ready to amplify the organization's message by using the figures from the police on those stopped while impaired. And then let the media know that a spokesperson is available. It is a natural story.

Look for national hooks for a story. Many organizations are discussing the proposed changes in health care. Use that information to bring in local coverage. For example, get a local person to talk about using prevention and treatment, when appropriate, instead of jail.

Keep up to date on Government releases as well as publications like the New England Journal of Medicine. If they issue a report, be ready to call the local assignment editor with a spokesperson with figures localizing the national story.

■ *An unusual method of delivery.*

To promote a local campaign to stop alcohol- and drug-impaired driving, a popular drive-time radio disk jockey was presented with a breakfast basket tied with red ribbons.

An environmental group sent their press release glued to a large plastic container. The station could not help but see it and read it!

- *An out-of-the-ordinary association with something already in the news.* When traces of poisonous substances were found in Chilean grapes, tobacco control activists pointed out that even larger amounts of these substances are found in a single cigarette.

- *An "opportunistic" exploration or elaboration of an issue.* This can become newsworthy, often because of a crisis or special event. When a local teenager died of alcohol poisoning after a "keg party," health activists worked with a national newspaper to explore such "sidebar issues" as teenage drinking, alcohol availability, and laws about hosting keg parties.

A local story can catch the eye of a national TV editor. Create local stories and bump them up! Television news often seeks a local organization for an angle on a news story. Look for ways to turn a negative story into a positive prevention focus.

- *The telephone actively.* Call the assignment editor a week before the event, the day before the event, and then follow up if a representative of a news organization does not attend. Simply say, "I did not see anyone from your group at our news conference, and I want to know if I can give you information you may have missed, or find out how we can help you in the future." This suggests to the media that their coverage is important to the organization or program.
- *The telephone reactively.* This is not used much, but it should be. When there is a breaking story, call the news outlet and offer an expert, or an opinion. For example, over the weekend a teenager was killed in a car crash where alcohol apparently was involved. Seize this story as an opportunity, tragic though it is. Call and offer not only information on the problem with teenage drinking — particularly around graduation and prom — but also offer someone who has been looking at the problem in the community.

## 2. Identify Media Spokespersons for the Organization

Choosing an effective media spokesperson is important. In some cases, the person who handles media relations may speak officially, but usually reporters want statements from persons with more rank. Therefore, the media relations person generally does the behind-the-scenes work, and the organization's executive director, president, or chairperson is the designated spokesperson who makes the actual statements to the media.

Unless it is within a tightly structured environment like a news conference, having many people talk with reporters is not a good idea. When reporters talk to different people at different times, the stories may not match exactly, and the resulting media story may be negative. Therefore, to make sure everyone is "reading from the same script," it is a good idea to limit media relations to a maximum of three persons. And if the media want to talk to "rank-and-file" people, select in advance those who will portray the program in a more favorable light rather than let the reporter come in and choose.

## 3. Develop and Maintain Media Lists

An up-to-date media list is an important tool for anyone working with news media. Although it takes some time to create a media list, the best list is one which is created by an organization or program to contain the information that meets its particular needs. Media lists are available for purchase, of course, but such lists tend to become outdated quickly, and in addition, purchased media lists often overlook small, new, and transient publications and programs.

Create a media list by using the local library's reference books on local and national media, media lists from local celebrities, public relations agencies, public relations professional organizations, and other media contacts. And ask media contacts for names of others who cover related issues.

Keep the detailed media list in a loose-leaf binder, using one page per media outlet:

- For a *daily or weekly newspaper*, include information on name, format, circulation, distribution area, publication date(s), street address, mailing address, telephone number, owners, chain affiliation, publisher, managing editor, community service director, advertising manager, news and public affairs directors, columnists, and deadlines. Also include information on whether the paper accepts public service advertising, has a letters-to-the-editor section and/or an op-ed page, prints public service news releases, or has a calendar listing. Be sure the list includes college and university publications.
- For a *radio or TV station*, include information on name, location on the dial, format, audience, broadcast area, hours on the air, street address, mailing address, telephone number, owners, network affiliation, general manager, news director, editorial director, public service director, advertising manager, public service programs, and news programs. Also include information on whether the station accepts PSAs and in what format (announcer-read or prerecorded on cassette, record, or reel-to-reel tape), does on-air editorials (and provides opportunities for editorial responses), and has locally produced news programming and staff reporters (or is fed through a network affiliation). Be sure the media list includes college and university radio stations as well as public radio and television stations. And do not forget the wire services and local bureaus of national newspapers, magazines, and broadcast entities.

Check the media and mailing lists regularly for accuracy. Remember: Using a wrong name can be a disaster.

#### 4. Use News Releases and News Advisories Effectively

Media stories are generally of two kinds: "breaking" news stories and stories planned in advance. Breaking news stories happen suddenly, often without warning. They usually dominate the headlines and provide the lead story on broadcast news programs.

Tag prevention issues onto a "breaker" and ride the wave of interest in the area. For every problem, present a possible solution. Or when a breaking story on alcohol, tobacco, or drugs arises, offer resource services. For smaller markets, consider making "actualities" available by telephone. That way, the smaller radio and television station can call a number and get sound bites.

Many other stories are planned in advance and originate with a news release or news advisory. When an organization or program uses a release or advisory, it is providing information to the media in a planned and professional way. Newspapers, magazines, radio stations, and television stations are being alerted to a story that should be covered — and all at the same time so that no one gets a "scoop" and limits the organization's or program's access to other media.

##### News Release

A news release can be written in advance of an event (to encourage media coverage and public awareness), concurrent with an event (to make sure that key points are highlighted), or following an event (to inform the public of what happened). Major media generally use advance or concurrent news releases; weekly newspapers often use all three types.

Most media organizations are inundated with news releases. A release is more likely to be read and taken seriously when it is typed on letterhead or news release stationery and prepared in the standard format. "For immediate release" (and the date of the release) and "for more information contact" (and the name and telephone numbers of the contact) are at the top of the page. Follow this with a catchy

or informative headline or title. Begin the first paragraph with a dateline and include the essentials: who, what, where, why, and when. The second paragraph has more information about the event or activity; a

quotation by a spokesperson is a good idea. The following paragraphs have additional information, if necessary. The final paragraph can be generic and describe the organization or program. (A standard descriptive closing paragraph for all news releases is a good idea.) Shorter is better for a news release; but if it continues to a second or third page, place "-more-" at the end of each page to alert the reader that the release continues. Paragraphs should not continue to succeeding pages; and identifying information should be placed at the top of each continuing page. At the end of the release, place "-30-" or "###."

Remember: Correct and complete contact information is essential. Include evening and weekend phone numbers in addition to work numbers because editors and reporters often work on weekends and after 5 p.m. If they cannot reach an organization or program to verify an upcoming event or get a quote, they may bypass the release.

If the release does get turned down after a followup call, do not be discouraged. Ask the editor to keep the organization or program in mind for future stories related to prevention issues.

##### News Advisory

A news advisory — an invitation no longer than a page in length — can be used instead of a news release to alert the media to a news conference or media event worthy of coverage. Type the news advisory on letterhead or news release stationery. "For immediate release" (and the date of the release) and "for more information contact" (and the name and telephone numbers of the contact) are at the

*Provide information to the media in planned and professional ways.*

top of the page. Follow this with a catchy or informative headline or title. List in outline form what (the event or subject), where (the location), when (the time), and who (the principals or major players). Place “-30-” or “###” at the end.

When using an advisory, always distribute a more detailed news release at the event or on the day of the event, and send copies to reporters who were not present.

### **Distributing News Releases and News Advisories**

Releases and advisories are usually distributed by mail. In larger media markets, a newswire service may increase the likelihood that a release or advisory is noticed; for small community media, hand delivering or faxing may work. To guide distribution efforts, find out and follow media deadlines for daily and weekly newspapers (and any Sunday editions), wire services, television and radio stations, and magazines.

### **5. Hold News Conferences and Briefings**

News conferences or briefings are a good idea when the organization or program has important news to announce — like the results of a study or the kickoff of a special campaign. But remember to use them sparingly because attendance requires a major commitment of time for news media. And if possible, check schedules in advance to be sure you are not setting up a no-show event.

A conference or briefing is an opportunity to provide the media with information in person, and an opportunity for the media to capture a visual or a live audio.

The format for most news conferences is a basic presentation followed by an opportunity for attendees to ask questions. Media kits — containing a fact sheet (two-page maximum), biographical sketch of leader(s), current news release, examples of news coverage, PSA (if distributed to radio/television), and black-and-white photographs — are usually distributed. Using a checklist for preconference, conference

day, and followup activities will help ensure that arrangements are in place for such essentials as rooms, speakers, budgets, media kits, refreshments, transportation, equipment, and microphones and electrical outlets.

*Don't call  
a news  
conference  
if you don't  
have news  
to report.*

A news briefing, which allows an organization to bring the media together informally and answer questions out of the glare of the spotlight, can be a useful alternative. Responses are also “on the record,” but more background information can be communicated.

### **6. Prepare Letters to the Editor and Op-Ed Articles**

Most newspapers devote at least one page to opinions, presenting them in, for example, editorials, letters to the editor, regular columns (both local and nationally syndicated), political cartoons, and contributed articles. In major media, the best way to maintain control over messages and to communicate ideas with minimal changes is to write a letter to the editor or an op-ed article.

#### **Letters to the Editor**

One of the simplest yet most effective forms of “controlled” media is a letter to the editor. If the local newspaper does not provide instructions, call the newspaper editorial department and ask for any specific rules that should be followed (for example, on how to address the letter and maximum length). Type the letter and include the full name of the author and a telephone number the newspaper can use to check authenticity.

Monitor published letters to get a feel for their style and tenor before starting to write. Make sure the letter says something different from those already published. If the letter is a response to an article, editorial, or letter published in the newspaper, do it quickly —



before the momentum of the story is lost — and refer to it by headline and date.

Occasionally encouraging volunteers, clients, or other supporters to write letters on a substance abuse problem prevention topic may be beneficial. Different letters on a single topic will strengthen the case; form letters or any indication of an organized letter-writing campaign will weaken the effort.

Remember that it is generally wiser to discuss errors in articles in a telephone call to the reporter than in a “set the record straight” letter to the editor. Writing a correction letter is a step to take only when other avenues have failed. In fact, sometimes it is better to let the issue die than to revive it and give the editor a reason to restate the newspaper’s position. However, when the newspaper has taken a position in its editorials, it is entirely appropriate to oppose or support the position in a letter.

### Op-Ed Articles and Guest Editorials

The op-ed section, usually on the page opposite the newspaper’s editorial page, generally presents regular columnists (national and local), but there may be opportunities for a guest columnist. Ask the editor for submission guidelines. An op-ed piece — usually three double-spaced, typed pages — provides more

*Maintain control over messages by writing letters to the editor and op-ed articles.*

space to address issues from the prevention perspective or to present the organization’s or program’s position when it differs from that endorsed by the newspaper. Remember to be succinct, and avoid going off on tangents that

detract from the main theme. Have another person with skills as a writer review the article before submitting it.

Opportunities for expressing opinions on broadcast media are few, but some television and radio stations air editorial opinions and

invite “opposing viewpoints.” Using such an avenue when available makes it possible to reach a wider audience with a message.

### 7. Get PSAs on the Air

PSAs are either general messages or specific announcements. General messages urge behavior changes (e.g., don’t use drugs). Specific announcements give details of upcoming events or activities (e.g., come out for next Saturday’s anti-drug march). A number of general message PSAs are nationally produced and feature celebrities or have been created by major advertising and production firms. It may be possible to work with the local station to localize the national PSAs with the telephone number of the organization or program (if this is permitted) — which will make it easier to concentrate on developing local PSAs to announce community activities and special events.

*Shorter PSAs are more likely to be aired.*

Many television and radio stations broadcast PSAs. These free commercials can be 10, 15, 30, or 60 seconds long. Because of competition for the limited time allocated for public service announcements, the shorter ones are more likely to be aired. Copy is read at a slightly slower pace for television than for radio: 10 seconds equals 20 words of text for television but 25 for radio.

PSAs generally air in the off hours, for example, early Sunday morning and after midnight, when the audience is smaller and selling air time is more difficult. However, for major campaigns, particularly those to which the station has a strong commitment, PSAs are sometimes aired during the daytime or evening prime time. Cable tv offers another excellent opportunity to have PSAs aired.

Stations often predetermine PSA themes; find out in advance. See if the station conducts ascertainment meetings, and get on the mailing list. Find out the PSA format that the radio

station prefers — announcer-read “live copy” or prerecorded on cassette, record, or reel-to-reel — to keep the PSA off the bottom of the pile. Many stations prefer announcer-read PSAs because they draw attention to their on-air personalities and do not compete with prerecorded paid commercials. Some all-news and talk stations prefer prerecorded PSAs with music backgrounds as a change of pace.

Television stations use announcer-read PSAs, accompanied by one or more slides and prerecorded film or video spots. The rule of thumb is to include one slide for each 10 seconds of air time. Some stations will request slides or photographs to accompany the PSA; others prefer to produce their own slides.

Hand deliver PSAs for radio and television at least 2 to 3 weeks ahead of time — more if possible. Time all PSAs, and include a word-for-word written text with prerecorded PSAs. For all PSAs, include a beginning date and an ending or “kill” date. A maximum of 3 months is a good idea.

## 8. Monitor and Measure Media Coverage

Media coverage can in general be placed in three categories: coverage that is generated through media relations efforts, coverage of an organization or program and its specific issues that is generated independently, and coverage of substance abuse problem prevention issues that are not specific to one program. Monitoring and measuring these categories of media coverage is vital. Knowing how the organization and substance abuse issues are being covered allows for a better appraisal of the successes and failures of media relations and helps guide future encounters with the media.

Monitoring and measuring media coverage help to:

*Monitoring and measuring helps judge successes and failures and position future efforts.*

- Correct misstatements and errors
- Identify persons in the media who are attuned to substance abuse problem prevention issues
- Classify the substance abuse issues that are regularly covered
- Position the organization or program properly with respect to national and regional stories
- Replicate successful media strategies
- Identify areas that need more media coverage.

Clipping services provide an excellent resource for monitoring stories that appear in newspapers and magazines. However, no clipping service can track all the stories, and it takes several days to several weeks before the clips are received. This means that it is necessary to review the major dailies and weeklies in the community regularly for stories on the organization or program and on substance abuse problem prevention in general and clip relevant articles.

Broadcast monitoring services provide video and audio copies of television and radio reports, but they tend to be expensive. It may be best to use them when an important story is breaking and complete coverage is needed; or it may be possible to ask staff or volunteers to tape the programs. Such home-made tapes will not have the same quality, but the only cost is for blank tapes. Sometimes the station will make a copy.

Media coverage can be measured in terms of quantity, placement, and content.

Quantity and placement measures are relatively objective; content measures are more subjective.

- **Quantity.** How much space did the story get? For print, quantity is measured in column inches; for electronic media, in seconds or minutes of air time. Try converting the amount of free publicity into dollars by calculating how much the

amount of space or time would cost. This could be important information if the organization or program has expenses associated with generating media coverage, such as those for setting up a news conference or bringing in a guest speaker.

- **Placement.** Where was the story placed? Certain placements — including the front page of a daily newspaper, above the fold, and the opening of the evening television news — reach the largest numbers. For specific audiences, other placements may be more effective. For example, the editorial and business pages of the local newspaper usually have high readership among local opinion leaders, but young people are more likely to read the comics.
- **Content.** Is the story positive, negative, or neutral? Consider the totality of the coverage in measuring content: Often the headline grabs attention, but the article itself is reasoned and more neutral. Or a fact or two may be wrong, but on balance the reporting is accurate and positive.

Regular media monitoring and measuring processes should be stepped up whenever the organization or program actively seeks media coverage through news releases, news conferences, or media events, or when a substance abuse problem prevention story with local implications is breaking nationally.

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## Getting the Best From Rural Media Sources

Rural and small-town media represent a unique area of American journalism. Their special characteristics provide growing opportunities for expanding print, radio, and other electronic media coverage. Rural and small-town media meet the needs of their audiences—and of substance abuse prevention programs—in a way that no other media can. Important strategies that ensure best results

from these media are developing interpersonal communication skills, giving a local slant and communicating early with media personnel, preparing fact sheets, creating a regional information network, emphasizing community relations, using local celebrities, having a spokesperson, and understanding the structure and characteristics of rural and small town media resources. An additional important strategy is using rural and small-town media to supplement communication efforts.

### 1. Develop Interpersonal Communication Skills

Rural coverage is based on good relationships with media personnel. Effective interpersonal communication skills are essential. Given the demographics of small towns and rural areas and the influence of the media in society, local newspaper, radio, and television reporters, editors, and managers are actually some of the most influential members of a community. They often also serve as executives in community and civic organizations such as the chamber of commerce as well as in other social and fraternal organizations. Seize all opportunities to meet and interact with local media personnel in social rather than professional settings. A good way to get to know editors and radio managers personally is to invite them to lunch. Find out what the organization can do to receive air time or space in the newspaper. But do not expect an immediate response. It takes time and patience to build good media relationships.

### 2. Give a Local Slant and Communicate With Media Personnel Early

- Remember that the best story in a rural or small-town market is the local one.
- Involve media personnel in developing the local angle during the planning stage of a substance abuse problem prevention campaign.
- Contact media sources ahead of time instead of building a whole campaign that cannot be covered because of space or air



time limitations. Editors and radio managers do not want to be the last consideration.

- Make any first contact with a reporter, editor, or manager in person, if at all possible.

### **3. Prepare Fact Sheets**

Fact sheets with information about the organization or program are helpful to all reporters—television, radio, and newspaper. The fact sheet should include the organization's founding date, logo, statement of purpose, community services, achievements, and, most importantly, a contact person and phone number for the reporter to call for more information. The fact sheet may not generate an immediate story, but it makes the organization's name familiar and sets the stage for a story on another occasion. The fact sheet also allows the organization to provide favorable background information for a story.

### **4. Create a Regional Information Network**

Collect, record, and publicize statistics about addiction in the area. Such information captures reader attention and provides an excellent lead for messages on the importance of prevention.

### **5. Emphasize Community Relations**

A well-attended substance abuse problem awareness event can appeal to a television or radio station as a community relations opportunity as well as a news story. Meet with the marketing or community affairs director of a television station and try to get him or her involved as a co-holder of the event. For example, on the T-shirts and hats being printed up, include the television or radio station's logo so that the station will provide ads promoting the event and the station. It is a win-win situation. And try to use one of the station's personalities in the promotion (e. g., a news anchor, sports anchor, or weatherperson).

### **6. Use Local Celebrities**

Enlist a local celebrity to lend support and credibility to the event. Newspapers and television and radio stations will go out of their way to cover, for example, the university basketball coach, the governor, or a local person who has achieved national recognition in his or her field.

### **7. Have an Available-at-Any-Hour Spokesperson**

Select and prepare a spokesperson to represent the organization or program. But remember that the media are more likely to use information on an organization when they do not get the run around. A spokesperson must be available at any hour, and media representatives should have the spokesperson's office, home, car, and fax numbers. Give the media a direct line to the spokesperson's office. He or she is the designated one to speak to the media and participate on television and radio talk shows.

### **8. Understand the Structure and Characteristics of Rural and Small-Town Media Resources**

Established rural and small-town media that prevention organizations and programs can utilize include the print media—daily, weekly, biweekly and tabloid newspapers, and nontraditional publications—and the electronic media—radio stations, television stations, public radio and television stations, and cable access channels.

#### **Print Media**

In general, rural print media concentrate their limited resources on local news coverage and rely on wire services or newspaper syndicates for national and State news.

*Daily newspapers.* Like their urban counterparts, daily newspapers in rural areas want "hard news" within an established deadline, such as Thursday at noon for Sunday coverage. Get to know those deadlines. In pitching a

story about a State or national observance or event with a local slant, describe the event in 50 words or less and answer these questions: Who does it affect locally? When will it happen? Why is it timely? In presenting hard news to the editor of a rural daily, remember that statistical information about the local market is a strong lead. Remember to hand carry the first few press releases to the city editor, managing editor, or assignment editor in order to get to know him or her.

When working with a daily newspaper that is large and well staffed, offer camera-ready art (logos or illustrations) for use in articles and make a photo opportunity available so the editor will assign a photographer or reporter. Remember that a reporter covering an event wants to interview someone in the sponsoring organization to get more information and to collect quotes that will give the story more human interest.

**Weekly newspapers.** In terms of getting space for a story, weekly newspapers are usually the hardest to access but have more freedom in content. These rural papers often operate with only one writer who also serves as the editor. When working with a small weekly newspaper, anticipate the editor's needs. Remember that weekly papers lose some stories because news becomes old quickly, and that weekly papers are looking for feature articles and human-interest stories. Cater to the editor and help him or her develop a comprehensive story about the organization or event.

And remember that weekly newspapers are filled with a variety of regular columns that may, for example, include news about school sports, other news about local schools, a calendar of church gatherings, and personal news about local residents. Using the personal news slant may be the best approach to getting space in a weekly newspaper: tell the story through a local resident; make it personal and up close. Chances are good that if it is well written and interesting, it will get published. Including a photo and a graph or a logo will help the story's chances of "getting some ink" in the paper. The photos and art work do not

have to be professionally done, but they do have to conform to the guidelines and standards of the news organization.

Contributing to county festivals and school events — high priorities for rural media — by providing information and people who can answer questions is another approach. Such contributions may provide an opening to convince the editor of the worth and creativity of a weekly column on substance abuse problem prevention. And ask the weekly newspaper editor if his or her paper saves money on printing costs by using a holding company that prints three or four other small county newspapers. A regular column published in one weekly could be published in the others and ultimately cover a much larger circulation area.

**Biweekly and tabloid newspapers.** In contrast to the emphasis on breaking news at daily newspapers, biweekly and tabloid newspapers — like weekly newspapers — emphasize feature stories. They can add flesh to the daily news bones. Remember that any press release going to a biweekly or tabloid newspaper should include quotes, different opinions, testimony, and good photos. Call ahead — usually 4 weeks — to find out if the biweekly or tabloid wants an information sheet on a substance abuse problem prevention campaign or event. It may be that the biweekly or tabloid will assign a reporter and/or photographer to develop a story.

**Nontraditional publications.** To get the prevention message out as widely as possible, consider contributions to church bulletins, employee newsletters, and other communications among members of fraternal, social, or civic organizations.

## Electronic Media

**Radio stations.** The rural electronic media market is blanketed by 5,000- to 50,000-watt stations. Get to know the station managers, if possible, and always know the receptionists. In many cases, it is the receptionist who has primary responsibility for community relations for the station and can be the messenger for or

## To Access the Benefits of Rural and Small-Town Media:

- Capitalize on the opportunities that rural and small-town media present instead of seeing this viable market as a second choice among communication sources. Rural media outlets tend to be operated by small staffs —sometimes they are one-person operations. Therefore, timing one's visit will be very important. Get to know deadlines and hours of operation. It will take some work (repeated visits and telephone calls), but the outcomes can be more varied and interesting.
- Use rural and small-town media to initiate programs that are models for other prevention advocates in larger market areas. Working with smaller

media outlets provides an opportunity to play a creative role in developing substance abuse prevention messages and campaigns. The smaller the market, the more opportunity there is to try something new. For example, one certified chemical dependency prevention specialist in a rural county created his own talk show through cable television on which each week he presented someone working on substance abuse problem prevention in the community, implemented prevention strategies targeted at parents, and/or interviewed a person whose life had been changed through treatment or prevention programs.

advocate of news on prevention efforts or events with the station manager.

In rare situations, Arbitron ratings may be available to help identify the station with the most relevant audience. However, radio station sales people can usually be relied upon to know their listening audiences. Ask for hand-outs on listener demographics by age grouping and keep them on file for quick reference.

The format generally determines which station is best for a specific age group or for a particular prevention message. A favorite format among small stations is country music; but if a prevention story appeals to a span of ages, look for a format with a more eclectic approach — playing 1960s and 1970s music — to get the message to both parents and young people.

Every rural radio station runs public service announcements (PSAs), which are free to community organizations. Find out how long a PSA should be and whether the station prefers a tape or a script to be read by one of their personalities.

**Television stations.** Each rural television station, like every radio station, runs public service announcements. Find out ahead of time what length (30 or 60 seconds) the station will run. Stations often vary in their commitment to PSA development, so make sure the PSA is easy for the stations to use. A tape that is ready to go will receive more air time.

Do not forget interview opportunities on public service shows or within newscasts. Decide what community issues the prevention organization or program is dealing with. Then develop people within the organization who can speak well on the subject. Work directly through the producer and offer them as a resource on those particular issues.

Try to access the medical segment of local television new programs. Health reporters at television stations develop stories from the constant stream of calls, letters, and faxes they receive from companies and organizations. A prevention-related health report can enlighten

people about how to take care of themselves, and the news organization receives credit for being interested in citizen well-being.

Due to deadline pressures, television reporters need to have stories spelled out to them quickly — they have limited time for research. Try to allow at least 2 hours before broadcast for a story to be completed. Remember, they need a story that is visual and action oriented in which pictures help to tell the story.

Once contact has been made with a person at each television station, begin perhaps monthly phone conversations with them just so that they will not forget the prevention organization.

**Public radio and television stations.** In many rural areas, public television and radio stations offer the largest viewing audience. Because of the recent expansion of channels available through cable, public channels are perceived as having fewer viewers than commercial channels, but it is not true. If commercial television is not a viable option, look into public media

resources: their audience often not only includes a large number of regular viewers but also covers a wide geographic area.

To gain access to public media resources:

- Write news releases for radio delivery by using short sentences that can be easily read. For a timely event, news personnel often follow up to get a taped interview to go with the regular radio news. Give the news bureau time to respond to a news release — at least a week.
- Ask about news breaks to nationally syndicated radio programs such as “Morning Edition” and “All Things Considered.”
- Volunteer for televised fundraising events over public television. Staffing telephones to take information on call-in contributions provides an opportunity for the organization to be visible while helping a community media resource.

## Cable Television Ads

Cable companies have appreciably lower advertising rates than commercial television stations. The “Cable Spot Advertising Directory” is available through most cable company ad departments if they hold membership in the Cable Television Advertising Bureau (telephone 212-751-7770).

The directory contains information on:

- **Market** — geographic area.
- **Areas served** — cities, villages, and townships.
- **Homes served** — actual number.
- **Penetration** — percentage of total number of homes in area served by cable.

- **Rates** — based on 30-second ad air time, determined by time of day aired. Ask about access to CNN, ESPN, TNT, USA, and TNN.
- **Sales contact** — name and telephone number.

A word of caution: Salespeople are available to take orders in any locale in the country, but because cable advertising is so new, the sales staff are often difficult to reach. To save time and frustration, if the organization or program has a 30-second spot on Beta Cam available, ask one of the more accessible cable advertising sales staff to broker the ad to designated cable companies.

- Ask the public television programming director if he or she is seeking new ideas for an original production in the station's studios. Grants often make a production about a worthy community service possible.
- Volunteer to serve on the public television advisory council.

**Cable access channels.** Many rural cable companies, which depend on the city or county government's agreement with the company, designate up to 5 percent of their income from cable fees to a community access channel. These channels are not sophisticated in their visual approach to programming, but they offer a large segment of the population an opportunity for access.

A community access channel views itself as a service to the community. For example, the statement of purpose of an access channel in a rural Ohio community — modeled after one in a Michigan community — stresses utilizing the public access channel on its cable television

system "by assisting in and promoting the development of local programming by and for individuals in the community, and various ethnic, religious, artistic, educational, governmental, professional, cultural, and other citizen groups."

For an organization working to prevent problems related to substance abuse, this statement translates into opportunity. It means access to a televised medium at little or no expense to the organization. It means that rural community access channel personnel encourage groups and individuals to utilize the facility for the creation and cablecast of unique programming. It also means that channel personnel may loan equipment owned by the access channel and teach community members how to operate that equipment in order to record an event of interest to the community.

Special events, particularly of a visual nature, should be videotaped regularly and designed for community outreach telecast over the community access channel. But remember that

### **To Access Rural Media Successfully:**

- Remember that **good ideas are appealing to rural newspapers.** Talk to the advertising personnel to get financial backing from area businesses for a special prevention effort.
- **Make a personal visit** to the managing editor or radio manager for editorial support of the project. Rural media sources often support pet causes: try to determine what the editor's special concerns and interests are. Then pitch information to the editor's special concerns or interests.
- **Piggyback a prevention message** on sports by sponsoring a team, particularly for teens or little leaguers.

The reporter will write sponsorship identification into the story every time the team plays.

- **Pitch a creative special-feature story idea** to the city editor that will enhance hard news stories. Allow 4 to 6 weeks for planning.
- **Use the seasonal breaks** — religious holidays, January, March, August — when news is slow to pitch a story that might not get high priority during high news times in fall and spring months.



logistics are just as important as program considerations and may make the difference in getting on the air. Before starting to videotape, talk to the director of the access channel service to find out about:

- Guidelines that should be observed.
- Length requirements or limitations.
- Special forms that must be completed in order to get a program into the cable telecast scheduling loop.
- Time slots. Weekday hours for access channels are usually 5 p.m. to 10 p.m., but there may be time restrictions on scheduling an event or educational materials.

As a general rule, use cable access channels for educational materials that are not time sensitive. Do not expect a videotape to be aired the day it is submitted. The tape will probably have to get in line for time on the schedule. But once on videotape, the material can be aired over and over again.

### **9. Use Rural and Small-Town Media To Supplement Communication Efforts**

The most successful communication efforts in rural markets are often the result of networking with other organizations, both nonprofit and profit. Know when to piggyback on other efforts in the community and when to release a story individually.

## **Special Considerations in Developing Rural Media Relations Plans:**

- **Accessibility.** The smaller newspaper has an accessible newsroom. Walk through it and talk with reporters, editors, and layout personnel. After a few well-timed visits, the organization or program may be perceived as a member of the news team and get called upon for stories.
- **Misconceptions.** Rural residents may view substance abuse problems as resulting from failure of the family to provide necessary support. Addiction and other problems related to the abuse of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs are often looked upon as moral weakness rather than a public health issue.
- **Circulation.** Most rural newspapers have a circulation of 25,000 or less for a Sunday issue. Often the readership is 16,000 to 20,000. Getting a prevention message to a large audience requires placing the story in more than one media outlet.
- **One editor.** Most rural print sources have one decision maker on placing stories — despite the picture of how a newspaper works in such movies as "The Paper." Do not fight with this person because he or she may not print the organization's prevention stories. Remember the adage: "Never argue with someone who buys ink by the barrel."
- **Good journalism.** Prevention stories are not a high priority for rural — or any other — media because prevention causes the absence of dramatic events. To get coverage, frame stories in a way that meets journalistic standards. For example, a car crash or fire is an opportunity to add a boxed story on prevention tips. Have such basic stories ready to give to the city editor.

High visibility through related organizations can offer a payback when newspapers and radio and television stations want to do timely features. The wider the span of an organization's or program's services in the community, the more its outreach efforts will be included in print and electronic media. The organization will be known as a team player working toward the betterment of the entire community. Stretch a bit in supplementing traditional print and electronic outreach by networking into other organizations.

*For example, during a crisis or disaster:*

The response to a natural disaster is usually planned and executed by county Red Cross chapters. Because Red Cross organizations traditionally have small budgets for public information, this is the time to offer help in getting the word out about rescue efforts. The public information campaign then offers an opportunity to piggyback messages about the dangers of dealing with disaster-related stress through the use of alcohol, tobacco, or drugs. Press releases, flyers, and special gatherings of counseling staff for victims can add significantly to the community effort.

During such crises, natural or otherwise, organize a readily available crisis team of professionals — such as a counselor, psychologist, case worker, social worker, community support manager, and secretary — to help in working with the media. The team can add to other community efforts or be a stand-alone team of experts to go with a special story. Pitching the story idea to media is easier when specific content specialists who go with the story are available for interviews. If there are sufficient funds, prepare videotapes on generic subjects with each team member that can be sent to television stations on a moment's notice.

*For example, through employee assistance programs:* The 1990s answer to high employee turnover is providing employee assistance programs (EAPs). Rather than terminate an employee, many profit and nonprofit organizations prefer to offer programs to address personal difficulties —such as

addiction, mental health problems, and financial problems — unrelated to the employee's job description. EAPs often include prevention and treatment services. They independently arrange referrals for client organizations, matching the client's employee problems to relevant services within the EAPs network of providers.

Employee assistance programs thus offer a good opportunity for community organizations to extend their reach. Get a list of EAPs from the State department of health. Call each to find out if its network needs more service providers. Be sure the organization's logo is on all materials sent to area EAPs.

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## Handling Communications in a Crisis

Coverage in the news media is a bonus when substance abuse programs are going well.

Mentions on the evening news or photographs in the morning paper are exciting because the visibility helps what the organization or coalition is doing. But sometimes substance abuse programs face problems and crisis situations that find their way into negative stories in print and on the airways.

Among these crisis situations have been fires that destroy agency records, arrests of local substance abuse prevention workers for drunk driving or drug

*Do not ignore a problem. Do not think it will go away or that the news media will not find out. If a problem is known within the organization or coalition, the chances are good that knowledge of the problem will reach the community and the news media. Begin planning for crisis communications before a problem arises.*

selling, and problems in accounting for program funds. Another crisis encountered by many has been "rifts within the coalition."

Whether large or small, a crisis that receives negative coverage in the news media can be painful, particularly when the coverage threatens the credibility of the organization or coalition as a voice for substance abuse problem prevention in the community. This is why it is necessary to be proactive and have a crisis communication plan in place. Remember that whatever the scope of the crisis, the organization or coalition can cope with the questions and concerns best if there are procedures for handling crises that have been agreed upon in advance.

### 1. Take Control When a Crisis Arises

These are the basic actions that ensure effective communications in a crisis situation:

- **Stay calm.** This is particularly important because it affects organizational morale and the image projected to the outside world, including reporters. Take a reasoned, rational approach. Show control and concern. Even if the situation is chaotic, do not let the outside world see the organization or coalition in seeming disarray. Avoid anger and defensiveness over any negative media coverage. And do not be stampeded into saying or doing something inappropriate on the spur of the moment.
- **Build an advisory team.** Select key members in the organization or coalition to form a team of advisers who will decide what strategy should be used to handle the crisis situation. In addition to the organization head and spokesperson, the team should include those knowledgeable about the situation. The team will also determine the most important issues they want the media to understand about the organization.
- **Designate a team leader.** This usually is the head of the organization or coalition. During the crisis, all information should

flow through this person, and all decisions and actions are approved by him or her. This person may also act as the spokesperson.

- **Designate a spokesperson.** Centralize the dissemination of information. Only the designated spokesperson — the head of the organization or a media liaison — should speak to the media during a crisis, on or off the record. And nothing should be said until the facts have been assembled, reviewed, and evaluated. Giving out incorrect information can make an organization or coalition look worse. However, while accuracy is important, the speed of the response can also have an impact on how the story is "framed" in the news media.

If an organization takes too long to draft a response, the media will turn elsewhere, for example to be a disgruntled former employee or a competing organization with a different agenda. If a response comes too late, the media may also ignore it, arguing the crisis is "old news." Notify everyone in the organization or coalition about these procedures. (See Designate a Spokesperson.)

*Retreating from news media in a crisis situation is almost never a good strategy.*

- **Get the facts.** Find out immediately what has occurred or is alleged to have occurred. Talk with those in the organization or coalition who are knowledgeable about the situation. Make it clear that they must provide accurate, timely, and complete information in order for the organization to be responsible and responsive. If initial information about the problem came from someone outside the organization, try to get the same kind of information from that person.

## Common Questions About Media Coverage of Crisis Situations

**Why do news media seem to prefer covering crisis situations?** Bad news sells more papers. This means that reporters, photographers, and camera crews are usually more willing to report on a problem in an organization or coalition than on a successful activity. And if the program has had positive publicity in the past, it may have enough name recognition to turn a minor mishap into a major crisis.

**Why do news reporters who were friendly seem to turn into enemies in crisis situations?** Rather than feeling betrayed, try to understand what is happening. Reporters who covered the organization in the past may have been taken off the story because of real or perceived conflicts of interest. Or because of competition for the story among the media, reporters have no choice but to keep digging for dirt. Or the story may seem to be so important that it has to be reported even if substance abuse problem prevention efforts are negatively affected. Remember that the reporters who may be hounding the organization for information are under pressure themselves — pressure to meet deadlines, pressure to get that sensational story that will increase circulation or market share, pressure to get the facts and get them right. Remember, too, that the good relationship the

organization has built with the reporters before the crisis may not provide immunity to negative coverage, but having previously established a credible public image with the media makes it easier to withstand any temporary onslaught of bad publicity.

**What if the information being reported in the media is wrong or misleading?** It may be difficult to avoid becoming angry. But expressing anger toward representatives of the media makes getting the facts across more difficult and builds up additional animosity. Try to remember that the reporters do not have a personal grudge against the organization. They are simply doing their job and covering the story. Of course, some-times a reporter will deliberately try to provoke anger to get beyond a reasonable response and generate a better quote. Do not be taken in by this strategy. Stay calm. Demonstrate control and composure in all crisis situations.

**In addition:** Until a problem is clearly proven to exist, do not accept responsibility for it. Later investigation may show that the crisis was overblown or even that there was no crisis. Do not go on public record as accepting responsibility for something that is nonexistent.

- **Be honest.** If the organization or coalition has made a mistake, admit it cleanly, candidly, and with no hedges or excuses. It may, for example, be best to apologize, explain how the organization plans to make it right, and pledge that it will not

happen again. Frame the news, even bad news, in the organization's own context.

- **Alert key supporters.** Funders, supporters, clients, and members should get information about the crisis from the

organization or coalition—not just from newspapers, radio, and television.

- **Prepare a statement.** Make it positive and clear. Demonstrate the organization or coalition's concern over the issue. (See Prepare a Statement and Issue the Statement.)

## 2. Designate a Spokesperson

When the program is going smoothly, designating a spokesperson is important. In a crisis situation, it is absolutely essential. All communications with the news media should flow through this one person.

Usually the person who speaks officially for the organization in a crisis is the executive director, president, or chairperson. Remember that reporters generally prefer quotes and statements from someone high up in the organization or coalition rather than from a media relations person. However, in some cases the head of the organization is not comfortable in talking to the news media in a crisis. Even though the best approach is to work with the organization's leader and prepare him or her to face reporters, there may not be time. In such a case, the designated spokesperson can be someone in the organization or coalition who is particularly good with and knowledgeable about news media. But make sure that this person is speaking for the organization or coalition and does not have a separate, more personal agenda.

Reporters may pressure the spokesperson to speak before the organization is ready. Do not make such a concession. In the substance abuse field there are issues of confidentiality and sensitivity that make it critical that individuals and programs be portrayed fairly and unsterotypically. Careful media management during a crisis situation can avoid such pitfalls.

Reporters often want to talk to others in addition to the designated spokesperson. This is not a good idea unless it is within a tightly structured environment, like a news conference, or in interviews set up in advance with selected individuals well prepared on the

situation and the organization's or coalition's official position. It is imperative that anyone who talks to the news media be knowledgeable about the details of the crisis. If stories from different people at different times do not match, reporters may build negative stories showing the organization or coalition at odds with itself. And individuals unaccustomed to media attention may inadvertently say something detrimental to the organization and then feel bad that their comments added to the problem.

## 3. Prepare a Statement

A concise written statement about the crisis situation should be prepared as soon as possible. In a serious crisis, the prepared written statement can stand as the official position of the organization or coalition. The statement can be presented orally or distributed to the news media in a written format, and it should be used as a basis for all responses to questions from the news media. Members of the crisis team should have copies of the statement.

Using a concise statement limits the information that goes to the media to a carefully crafted, agreed-upon statement. It avoids raising unnecessary concerns and questions and prevents any broad-ranging discussion that may inadvertently provide more information than needed.

In addition, remember that dealing with rumors is a difficult process. Never mention

*In a crisis, no one — not even an organization head and/or designated spokesperson — should speak off the cuff. Everything said should be based on a prepared written statement that has been reviewed and signed off on by a crisis management team.*



rumors. Mentioning a rumor may give it credence and perpetuate the story. Reporters who have not heard the rumor may start off on a whole line of questioning trying to confirm it. The best advice is to talk in generalities and answer the questions raised by the rumor *without* mentioning the existence of the rumor itself.

Sometimes a written statement is the only information given to the media. In such a case, the spokesperson should make clear when he or she reads it that no further information is available at that time.

A statement provides facts and gives the organization or coalition's point of view on the situation. It should be:

- **Short.** Condense the statement to one page and include only the most important information needed by reporters or the public.
- **Factual.** Concentrate on the information that is known and play down what is unknown.
- **Positive.** Craft a statement that uses positive and reassuring language and is not defensive.

The crisis team should review and approve any statement. If the crisis is extremely serious — injury, loss of life, criminal activity — it is advisable to have a lawyer review the text to make sure that the statement does not place the organization or coalition or the persons involved in increased jeopardy.

Further, in most States, medical and patient records are confidential to that specific patient and his or her doctor. Even confirming that a particular person has in the past or is currently receiving treatment may open doors to legal action. Talk with the organization's legal adviser about what can and cannot be said about treatment.

If the organization does not already have a lawyer, volunteer legal help may be available, or it may be possible to retain a lawyer connected to a top-flight public relations firm. The crisis may actually help the group identify new and valuable resources.

#### 4. Issue the Statement

Ways to release a statement to the news media include:

- Sending it to community news desks by overnight mail, messenger, or fax, either in

### Basic stages in a media crisis situation:

- **Possible development of a crisis.** There is still a question of whether the situation will escalate into a media story. Look ahead. Check the crisis communication strategy.
- **The crisis.** The situation is being covered by the news media, and the organization or coalition is under siege. Take control. Keep committed to substance abuse problem prevention, and follow the basic rules of crisis communications.
- **Recovery.** The crisis story is no longer major news. The organization has gotten through it. Remember that many major corporations have rebounded successfully from public relations crises that threatened to put them out of business. Keep focused on substance abuse problem prevention goals, and do not allow any setbacks to derail these efforts.

a mass distribution or to individual reporters and editors as requested

- Providing it over the telephone to reporters and editors who call asking for the statement
- Delivering it at a news conference or news briefing to reporters from print and electronic media.

When releasing a statement, remember to include the name of the organization's spokesperson. This information will ensure that reporters contact the right person for further information in the future.

*Evaluating coverage can help the organization decide how best to frame the crisis situation, both during the crisis and as the organization or coalition is recovering from the crisis.*

In a crisis situation, it is often best to provide the same information to all media at the same time so that no news organization gets to scoop the others. Sometimes a news organization that feels left out seeks its information from other sources that may be less supportive

of the organization or coalition and more inclined to put a negative spin on what is occurring.

A news conference may be the best approach if the story is major because it provides television with an opportunity for visuals and radio with the opportunity for live audio coverage. News conferences can be quite formal: the designated spokesperson gives a brief prepared statement from a podium, and then the reporters in the audience have the chance to ask questions. A media kit giving the background on the organization or coalition and its activities can be distributed. News briefings are less formal, often taking place around a table. Responses at briefings are also on the record,

but the format allows an easier conversation flow.

News conferences and news briefings should be held sparingly because they require a major time commitment from the news media staff who attend. Bringing the media together in this way should occur only when there is major new information that needs to be communicated.

## 5. Monitor Media Coverage

In any crisis situation, make sure that someone is tracking all the coverage — on television and radio, in newspapers and magazines. Remember that news media have a lot to do with the way substance abuse problem prevention activities are perceived in the community. Any misstatements and errors can be corrected as soon as they appear, and if necessary, strategies can be quickly developed to counteract negative portrayals of the program.

The regular newspaper clipping service, which is fine for ongoing print media monitoring, cannot be relied upon during a crisis situation. No clipping service can track all stories, and there is generally a delay of several days before the clips are received. Detail staff or volunteers to read and clip every local newspaper and magazine and pay particular attention to the letters-to-the-editor sections to help gauge community feelings about the situation.

Electronic monitoring services that provide video copies of television news stories and audio copies of radio news reports are available in many cities, but these tend to be expensive. Find staff and volunteers to watch every local newscast and listen to all the local radio stations that provide news and information. Ask them to make video- and audiotapes and pay close attention to the radio call-in shows to help gauge the feelings of community residents toward the situation.

In evaluating the coverage, try to be as objective as possible. It is all too easy to judge coverage by a few terrible headlines and some

negative letters to the editor. Look at the answers to the following questions in making judgments:

- ***How much coverage?*** How many column inches did the story run in the newspaper or magazine? How many seconds or minutes in the electronic media? Did the story run once or twice or repeatedly over a series of days or weeks? What is the circulation or the audience of the media that covered the story?
- ***What type of placement?*** Did the story lead the evening news with an on-site reporter and camera crew? Or was it simply mentioned by the anchor in passing? Did a photograph accompany the newspaper article? Did the story appear above the fold on the first page of a section? Or was it back with the classifieds?
- ***What kind of coverage?*** Did the coverage appear balanced? Or did the writer or reporter seem to focus primarily on the negatives? Were there editorials, commentaries, or other media accounts that took a stand for or against the issue or group? Did the headlines or electronic advance promotions (promos) seem inflammatory or sensationalist?

If the story is a continuing one, move quickly to get corrections on obvious errors or misstatements in the media coverage. But if the initial coverage is fairly low key, it may make more sense to let the issue pass rather than prolong the coverage and public attention by insisting on a retraction or correction.

Remember, too, that viewers, listeners, and readers tend not to focus on one line or one picture but on the totality. If most of the coverage was fair and accurate, it is generally better not to contest the quote that was not quite right or the misspelling of the executive director's name.

Evaluating the coverage can also help the organization decide how best to frame the

crisis situation, both during the crisis and as the organization or coalition is recovering from the crisis. Review the coverage, trying to determine whether the public is looking at broader substance abuse issues or more specifically at the organization or coalition. For example, if the crisis situation is the result of an employee or volunteer involved in substance abuse problem prevention being arrested for impaired driving or using drugs, the organization could choose to frame the issue by focusing attention on:

- Why the person was on the staff or in a major volunteer capacity and how screening efforts will be improved to minimize the chance of such an arrest happening again
- The pervasiveness of substance abuse, how this pervasiveness affects even persons who are perceived as upstanding citizens, and ways to provide treatment options
- How fast the organization or coalition was in identifying the problem and then in either disassociating itself from the individual in question or providing treatment and counseling for the substance abuse problem
- The need for increased substance abuse problem prevention within the organization or coalition and its extended membership or clientele
- How and why recovering persons are used in substance abuse problem prevention programs and what the risks are of relapse for those persons despite the best of intentions.

## **6. Recover From the Crisis**

Crises do end. Organizations get through them. But it is necessary to plan and coordinate in the final recovery stage as well (see the "Basic stages in a media crisis situation" box).

It may be necessary, for example, to pull the organization or coalition out of the public glare for a short period to regroup and give the public time to forget the bad news. Continuing with business as usual during and immediately after a time of crisis is often not possible. When people are reading or hearing about the organization or coalition negatively, it may be extremely difficult to recruit volunteers, raise funds, or hold youth programs. A major fundraising event held during or just after a crisis may only give the news media another opportunity to highlight the problem situation, but if the organization waits until the public has gone on to another issue, the media can cover a fundraiser with no mention of the past crisis.

Many organizations and coalitions that have experienced severe crisis situations under the glare of television cameras find not only that they have gotten through it and recovered but also that the crisis has been beneficial. Weaknesses have been identified and problems corrected. The negative stories have offered the organization or coalition an opportunity to

highlight the positive aspects of the program, to turn minuses into pluses. Once all the facts are provided, reporters are generally willing to do stories that set the record straight. Particularly if the organization or coalition has had a favorable image in the past, the crisis can be seen more as an aberration than a regular way of doing business. The painful process the organization has gone through in its crisis situation can lead to positive future media coverage.

Most important is working to keep membership focused on substance abuse problem prevention goals. Do not allow a short-term setback to derail prevention efforts. Mistakes are common, and some of these mistakes end up in the daily paper and on the evening news. But by coming together as an organization and coalition, by making sure an effective communication procedure is in place, by being up front and honest with the news media, an organization can come through a crisis, retain community support and the respect of media professionals, and further program objectives.

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- National Resource Center for Rural Elderly, University of Missouri-Kansas City, 5100 Rockhill Road, Kansas City, MO 64110-2499, (816) 235-1024. Provides information on the health needs of rural elders.
- National Rural Health Association, National Service Center, One West Armour Boulevard, Suite 301, Kansas City, MO 64111, (816) 756-3144.
- Rural Information Center (RIC), National Agricultural Library, Room 304, 10301 Baltimore Boulevard, Beltsville, MD 20705-2351, (800) 633-7701/(301) 344-2547. Provides information on health programs and services for people living in rural communities.
- USDA Extension Service, Room 3328, USDA South Building, Independence Avenue at 12th and 14th Streets, Washington, DC 20250-0900, (202) 720-2791. Provides information on health, programming, the economic and the transportation needs of citizens in rural communities.





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make all the copies you want.*

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**Developed and Produced by the CSAP Communications Team.**

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This bulletin is one in a series developed to assist programs that are working to prevent substance abuse problems. We welcome your suggestions regarding information that may be included in future bulletins. For help in learning about your audience, developing messages and materials, and evaluating communication programs, contact the CSAP Communications Team, 7200 Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 500, Bethesda, MD 20814-4820, (301) 941-8500.